



## Celebrating Alexander Hamilton

An Interview with Roger Stein,  
Chief Executive Officer, Penporium



Montegrappa's Alexander Hamilton Limited Edition Fountain Pen and Rollerball series

**EDITORS' NOTE** Roger Stein started owning Standardbred horses in 1976, received his training license in 1979, and was the most successful Harness trainer in California. He eventually converted to training Thoroughbreds in early 1997 on the Southern California circuit. Thanks to his financial success in the horse training and racing industry, he was able to invest heavily in Penporium.



Roger Stein

**COMPANY BRIEF** Penporium ([penporium.com](http://penporium.com)) is an online retailer and is located just outside of Los Angeles, California. Today Penporium.com carries more than 15,000 fine writing instruments. Penporium's mission is to provide the best quality and variety of regular, limited and unique writing instruments, all available for purchase with immediate shipping.

### How did your collaboration with Montegrappa develop?

I have been a long-time fan of Montegrappa and have invested more than \$2 million dollars over the past seven years in purchasing Montegrappa, Tibaldi and Bugatti pens for resale through my company Penporium.com. I have had the opportunity and time to check on every pen that has been created under Giuseppe Aquila's leadership at Montegrappa. With this level of experience with the products of Montegrappa, I concluded that the Aquila family makes the best pens in the world, so I contacted Giuseppe and explained that I felt that only Montegrappa could make my vision become a reality.

### Will you highlight the Alexander Hamilton Limited Edition Fountain Pen and Rollerball series?

I brought up the idea of an edition that celebrated Alexander Hamilton and had some very focused ideas about how I wanted to proceed in the sense of an overall look for the pen itself. I have the kind of in-depth experience in this industry to have a perfect understanding of what works well in the marketplace, coupled with an artistic sense that is always ready to embrace bold design elements.

With the development of the Hamilton Edition, Giuseppe and I could go a little more "outside the box" with some of the design elements,

particularly the rendering depicting the flame from the Statue of Liberty that graces the cap top. Thanks to the artistry available from Montegrappa, we were also able to count on highly detailed sculptural metal work for the cap bands and barrel ends.

Earlier on in the process, the decision was made to produce two versions, as we simply felt very strongly about the need to include both a portrait of Hamilton done in a formal classical style, as well as something that focused on a celebration of Hamilton's

work with the U.S. financial system. Thus, the two versions of the pen, one featuring a depiction of Hamilton based on John Trumbull's famous portrait, and the other using a depiction based on that used on the US \$10 currency.

Both feature selections from Hamilton's writings on the caps and are set off with Montegrappa's exquisite metalwork forming intricate cap bands. The fountain pens are fitted with an 18K Montegrappa nib featuring stylized "AH" initials. It took some fine-tuning, but it was surprising how quickly the pieces fell into place. We are all very proud of the result and feel that it manages to do justice to one of America's most influential founding fathers.

Many of the challenges associated with the desire for a specific look and feel for the metalwork on the trim were quickly overcome by Giuseppe's experienced artists and engineers. Another challenge was the fact that although a writing instrument can be a great canvas for artwork, we are limited regarding the designs selected due to the size and three-dimensional shape of the pen itself.

By working with Giuseppe and his team, we could recreate a portrait of Alexander Hamilton in two different ways – one hand-painted on a black background, the other created by an engraving process. There were many trials in creating such detailed elements and ensuring that each version showcased the portrait in the best light. Additionally, it was important to me that the two versions of the Hamilton Edition worked together visually, for those who wished to purchase the pair. Despite the difficulty of these challenges, Montegrappa continued to impress us with their ability to take even the slightest suggestion and, through the work of their artists and engineers, transform it into a reality we could hold in our hands.

### Where did your passion for Alexander Hamilton come from?

I was inspired by the thought of taking one of the more important characters in American history and celebrating his life and accomplishments. Hamilton was a vital part of the development of America as a nation, but not a figure like Washington or Jefferson who remains well known to all. Hamilton's accomplishments include the development and implementation of a central banking system as well as his work with the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

The work he began as the first Secretary of the Treasury allowed the United States to move onto the world stage as a significant player in the world during a turbulent time. Hamilton not only designed the first currency in America, but he also laid the foundations of the modern financial system. He replaced foreign coinage widely used throughout the young country of America's original financial system with the U.S. Dollar, which has become the world's reserve currency. He also developed and implemented what has become the modern bond market.

The recent attention to Hamilton as a major historical figure arising from the Broadway Musical provided the perfect opportunity to create an edition that focused on celebrating the life and accomplishments of Alexander Hamilton.

On January 18, 2017, manuscripts, personal letters and hundreds of other documents from founding father Alexander Hamilton's desk sold for a total of \$2.6 million at Sotheby's in New York. The items came from a family collection passed down since the 18th century.

Seven letters and manuscripts sold for more than \$100,000 individually, according to the auction house. "Pacificus VI," a draft essay written by Pacificus, which was Hamilton's pseudonym while writing "The Federalist Papers," sold for \$262,500. In the essay, unknown to the public before its introduction at the auction, Hamilton debates James Madison about America's neutrality in foreign tensions.

A commissioning document appointing Hamilton to be General George Washington's aide-de-camp sold for \$212,500. The appointment is said to have been a pivotal moment in Hamilton's life, ultimately leading to his influential role in American history.

The auction of these papers was the original inspiration for me to create an edition celebrating a major historical figure I have long admired. ●